

# Discursivity, difference, and disruption: Genealogical reflections on the consumer culture theory heteroglossia

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## Abstract

We offer a genealogical perspective on the reflexive critique that consumer culture theory (CCT) has institutionalized a hyperindividualizing, overly agentic, and sociologically impoverished mode of analysis that impedes systematic investigations into the historical, ideological, and sociological shaping of marketing, markets, and consumption systems. Our analysis shows that the CCT pioneers embraced the humanistic/experientialist discourse to carve out a disciplinary niche in a largely antagonistic marketing field. However, this original epistemological orientation has long given way to a multilayered CCT heteroglossia that features a broad range of theorizations integrating structural and agentic levels of analysis. We close with a discussion of how reflexive debates over CCT's supposed biases toward the agentic reproduce symbolic distinctions between North American and European scholarship styles and thus primarily reflect the institutional interests of those positioned in the Northern hemisphere. By destabilizing the north–south and center–periphery relations of power that have long-framed metropole social science constructions of the marginalized cultural “other” as an object of study—rather than as a producer of legitimate knowledge and theory—the CCT heteroglossia can be further diversified and enriched through a blending of historical, material, critical, and experiential perspectives.

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In 2005, Arnould and Thompson reviewed a stream of consumer research that had been variously glossed as qualitative, interpretivist, postpositivist, and postmodern. They argued that each of these familiar monikers reproduced the very misconceptions and misleading connotations that had undermined this scholarly current's institutional legitimacy and its capacity to compete for desired resources (most notably job placements for newly minted PhDs doing culturally oriented research). Owing to strategic considerations outlined in their article, Arnould and Thompson (2005) proposed that consumer culture theory (CCT) would provide a more efficacious academic "brand." In a companion commentary, Arnould and Thompson (2007) concluded that the moniker consumer culture theoretics better reflected this research tradition's conceptual, methodological, and philosophical diversity. In this article, we employ Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia to more thoroughly explicate the intersecting, overlapping, and, at times, conflicting polydiscursive constitution of CCT and in so doing, build upon a series of reflexive analyses addressing the current and future state of CCT research (Arnould and Thompson, 2007; Askegaard and Linnet, 2011; Cova et al., 2009; Moisander et al., 2009).

To begin with the concept of heteroglossia, Bakhtin (1981) argued, in the context of his broader formulation of dialogism, that the meaning of a verbal utterance or written statement is constructed within a complex historical matrix of sociolinguistic relations:

Thus, at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth. These languages of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying languages. Each of these languages of heteroglossia requires a methodology very different from the others; each is grounded in a different principle for marking differences and for establishing units. (Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination*, p. 291)

As Holquist (1990) elaborates, heteroglossia implies that meaning is determined through the play of powerful but unstable and historically contingent social, institutional, and discursive forces. In regard to the latter condition, Bakhtin (1981) also held that meaning is dialogical in form; that is, it is not only a matter of encoding and signification but also encompasses the social responses that a statement invokes in particular audiences. And these dialogical responses can themselves draw from a broad range of intersecting discursive systems or language games (though the range of legitimate or credible response will be delimited by institutional forces). Thus, the meaning of a term, or of more complex statements, is constituted by (1) the institutional conditions that situate speakers and audiences; (2) the broader sociocultural system that contextualizes the institutional field; and (3), last but not least, the heteroglot mix of language games that have varying degrees of currency and/or legitimacy in the institutional field. When these background conditions change, so do the constituted meanings they situate.

To clarify this argument, the changes in institutional conditions, unless they are in some sense revolutionary, do not lead to radical breaches in the constitution of meaning. Rather, they generate nuanced but potentially consequential semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic differences

that need to be recognized, parsed, and explicated. From this standpoint, then, the meanings of key rhetorical and methodological practices and paradigmatic defining terms or language games that CCT deployed during the paradigm debates of the 1980s differ from those invoked during the second wave of CCT research (circa mid-1990s to early 2000s) when norms of paradigmatic pluralism fundamentally reshaped marketing/consumer research debates over “alternative ways of knowing” (Brown, 1996) and shifted again after the third wave emerged in the wake of the CCT brand and its formalization in an annual international conference and organization (Sherry, 2012).

We propose that the reflexive analyses of CCT should address the terms of these heteroglossic differences, and the conditions that precipitated them, to effectively historicize its discursive practices and to better gauge its institutional consequences. Prior reflexive accounts have called attention to the latent risks and threats posed by the fairly rapid institutionalization of CCT as a recognized paradigmatic category within consumer research and marketing. Most notable among these envisioned risks are the imposition of constraining theoretical, methodological, and managerially skewed orthodoxies that would, in effect, straightjacket the conduct of cultural analysis, particularly that of a critical stripe (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011; Tadajewski and Brownlie, 2008) and relatedly, the suppression of dissident and/or marginalized perspectives by a hegemonic system of epistemological, ontological, and axiological mandates (Moisander et al., 2009).

We focus on a specific reflexive critique that is often implicated in these broader concerns that CCT’s institutionalization could precipitate an intellectually stifling “new dogma” (Fuat Firat’s interview comment in Bradshaw and Dholakia, 2012). This critique, whether voiced by Moisander et al., Askegaard and Linnet, or Firat, holds that crystallized CCT axioms are now reproducing the hyperindividualizing, overly agentic, and ahistoric, sociologically impoverished theoretical orientation that has reigned in the broader consumer research/marketing fields. In this admonishing perspective, CCT is now, paradoxically, posing paradigmatic barriers to systematic investigations into the sociocultural shaping of consumption and the ideological production of consumer subject positions:

Much of the early and recent CCT work continues to view the *individual* as the primary unit of analysis. In the psychological tradition, researchers typically draw from intra-personal psychological constructs and processes such as extended self, self-identity, and personal values and meanings in making sense of consumption behaviors . . . It makes much sense that interpretive scholars continue to examine the individual as unit of analysis, as individualism is both a powerful agent and effect of marketization globally. Even so, in carrying out studies of the individual, it is difficult to see changes over time, such as the losses of tradition (Hefner, 1998) and the increasing emphasis on children (Cook, 2003). (Moisander et al., 2009: 15–6)

We agree with Moisander and coauthors that for CCT research to progress beyond this one-sided attention to the self-realizing individual, new conceptualizations and models are required (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011: 386).

In the context of the structure–agency debate, then, our reflections here should not be taken as a dismissal of consumer agency, but rather as a word of warning against letting contemporary individualism, whether it expresses the ideologies of the Cold War period (Tadajewski, 2006a); humanist psychology and its influence on an American popular culture of self-actualization (Illouz, 2008); or contemporary neoliberalism (e.g. Shankar et al., 2006; Zwick et al., 2008) overshadow the notion that the human being is first and foremost a social and cultural animal. (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011: 400)

Unquestionably, the CCT heteroglossia has featured an experientially and emically oriented discursive system, with new studies continually being added to the tradition (e.g. Bahl and Milne, 2010; Beverland and Ferrelly, 2010; Chytкова, 2011; Coupland, 2005; Epp and Price, 2010; Joy and Sherry, 2003; Russell and Levy, 2012; Sherry and Schouten, 2002). More debatable, however, is the contention that these experientialist/emic analyses constitute a hegemonic discourse whose oppressive disciplinary power is impeding the production and publication of research investigating the sociocultural shaping of consumption and the ideological production of consumer subject positions. To counter these portentous assessments, we simply note that a cavalcade of CCT studies have extensively addressed the institutional, historical, ideological, and sociological shaping of consumption and the broader market and social systems, which situate consumers' identity projects and consumption practices (e.g. Allen, 2002; Arnould, 1989; Arsel and Bean, 2013; Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Askegaard et al., 2005; Bardhi et al., 2012; Bernthal et al., 2005; Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Giesler, 2006, 2008, 2012; Goulding et al., 2009; Holt, 1995, 1997, 1988, 2002; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Humphreys, 2010; Jafari and Goulding, 2008; Kates, 2002, 2004; Karababa and Ger, 2011; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006; Kozinets, 2008; Luedicke et al., 2010; Murray, 2002; Peñaloza, 1994a, 2001; Peñaloza and Barnhart, 2011; Peñaloza and Gilly, 1999; Press and Arnould, 2011; Ringberg et al., 2007; Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Thompson, 2004; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007; Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Thompson and Tian, 2008; Tumbat and Belk, 2011; Ulver-Sneistrup et al., 2011; Üstüner and Holt, 2007, 2010; Üstüner and Thompson, 2012; Varman and Belk, 2009; Varman and Costa, 2009; Wong and King, 2008; Zhao and Belk, 2008).

Interestingly, Moisander et al. (2009) and, even more so, Askegaard and Linett (2011) recognize that a considerable volume of CCT research has indeed investigated the historical, sociological, ideological, and institutional shaping of consumption and marketplace phenomenon. Yet, the authors of these reflexive calls to arms rhetorically cast these decidedly nonemic, treatments to the disciplinary margins. Instead, they suggest that existential–phenomenological methods (Thompson et al., 1989) and naturalistic inquiries (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) remain dominant in the CCT heteroglossia, even though their respective disciplinary influences peaked in the early 1990s and their limitations have been well documented (Belk, 1991; Holt, 1991; Joy, 1994; Joy et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 1998).

From our standpoint, these selective readings of the CCT heteroglossia indirectly point to epistemological and ontological ambiguities that have arisen from CCT's complex institutional history. At minimum, a reflexive framework should be able to account for the coexistence of emic-oriented approaches and analyses that highlight sociocultural structures that has historically defined the CCT heteroglossia and relatedly, the relative (and shifting) positions of centrality that these emic and etic ontologies have held within CCT's ever evolving matrix of rhetorical, theoretical, and methodological practices.

Toward the goal of clarifying these ambiguities and addressing these conditions of coexistence, our genealogical analysis (Foucault, 1977) revisits the institutional context in which CCT began to emerge as a legitimate field of inquiry. We first consider why an emically focused humanistic/methodological discursive system was so integral to this paradigmatic realignment of the marketing and consumer research fields. Next, we discuss how consumer researchers employing this humanistic/experientialist discourse gradually reconfigured its original epistemological premises—which were largely adapted from logical empiricist practices of empirical verification—and sparked reverberations that contributed to the discursive diversification of the CCT

heteroglossia and, as a consequence, that also fundamentally transformed the meaning of the emic and the agentic within CCT's contemporary discursive representations.

Our analysis will build a case that the dilemmas highlighted by Moisander et al. (2009) and Askegaard and Linnet (2011) manifest a more complex genealogical story than the hegemony of the agentic over the structural or the emic over the etic. Rather, we argue that they emanate from the institutional embeddedness of the CCT heteroglossia in the fields of academic marketing and mainstream (e.g. psychologically oriented) consumer research, where logical empiricist epistemological principles continue to hold sway. As a consequence, the practices of empirical verification—which ties interpretive validity to the emic realm—continue to live on as anachronistic rhetorical gestures that can impede the deployment of sociohistoric modes of CCT analysis, particularly through the institutional practice of journal reviewing.

Reviewers of this manuscript rightly pointed out that the marketing field is also embedded in the broader sphere of the social sciences and hence, any genealogy should cast a much broader institutional net than simply focusing on marketing. However, we retain a narrower focus, in part, because an attempt to encompass the manifold debates between structuralists and phenomenologists, postmodernists versus Marxists, deconstructionists versus formalists, Habermasians versus Foucauldians, behaviorists versus cognitivists, and so on, is clearly beyond the boundaries of a single journal article. More importantly, our analysis reflects that there is a fairly permeable boundary between marketing and consumer research—characterized by considerable overlap and cross-fertilization between journals and researchers—while the marketing field itself has been highly parochial (see Brown, 1995, 1998 for further discussion). For example, marketing's positivism versus relativism debates of the early 1980s—and the very specific set of external authorities they selectively referenced and lionized such as Kuhn, Popper, Laudan, Feyerabend, and Wittgenstein—played a more direct and salient role in the institutional emergence of alternative ways of knowing in consumer research than other epistemological and ontological debates waged in the social sciences (see e.g. Anderson, 1986, 1989; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Hunt, 1991).

In this regard, the parochial intellectual practices of the marketing discipline, circa 1980–1990, bear some similarity to the cultural orientations of Lower Cultural Capital (LCC) Turkish cultural elites studied by Üstüner and Holt (2010). As they discuss, LCC Turkish elites prefer goods, brands, and cultural productions, which they deem to be local in origin and only embrace more global/cosmopolitan options once they have been indigenized by Turkish taste makers, such as celebrities. In a parallel fashion, marketing and consumer research (which can be seen as the comparatively lower cultural capital/higher economic capital members of the broader social science community) amplified the importance of indigenized intellectual resources. Owing to this indigenization, for example, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) naturalistic inquiry—which otherwise had relatively little impact outside its home field of educational psychology—exhibited an unusual degree of influence upon the early conduct of interpretivist research, whereas little attention was paid to other methodological approaches, such as Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology, that held canonical status in the field of interpretive sociology.

The institutional backdrop to the marketing science debate (and the epistemological questions and issues it interjected into consumer research's paradigm wars) was set by the marketing discipline's reflexive preoccupation over its status as a legitimate field of scientific inquiry, as exemplified by the longstanding debate over marketing-as-art (as in practice or craft) versus marketing-as-science (see Brown, 1996 for an extensive review of these deliberations, which were first crystallized as a disciplinary narrative by Converse, 1945). In these debates, proponents of the

positivistic view based their idealizations of the scientific method on the natural sciences, whereas those endorsing relativistic positions tended to draw from sociology of knowledge accounts which contended that the presumed objectivity of the (natural) scientific method masks a gamut of social, political, careerist, and psychological influences that shape the production of knowledge (e.g. Anderson, 1983; Buzzell, 1963; Olson and Peter, 1983).

Unquestionably, the emergence of CCT in consumer research drew intellectual energy and some degree of justification from the social sciences' interpretive turn (Sherry, 1991), albeit well after this shift had taken hold in other fields. However, the interdisciplinary influences that shaped the emergence of CCT were more sociopolitical than intellectual. As Tadjewski (2006) extensively documents, the emergence of marketing as a field defined by its commitment to quantification and hypotheticodeductive theory testing (the dominant episteme that the CCT movement would eventually have to challenge) gained significant institutional traction during the Cold War. Against the specter of McCarthyism, major philanthropic funding organizations (most particularly the Ford Foundation) and government research granting agencies (i.e. the National Science Foundation) became wary of associations with sociology and history owing to intellectual ties with critical theory (e.g. Marxist thought) and began channeling money toward fields that were seen as strengthening the US economy and its political system from the Soviet challenge. Marketing, seeking to burnish its scientific credentials, proved a willing and enthusiastic recipient of this support.

As Brown (1996) discusses the prominent subset of marketing/consumer researchers (i.e. Belk, Hirschman, Holbrook, O'Guinn, Sherry, and Wallendorf) who led the humanistic charge against the epistemological norms set by this Cold War legacy drew from a revolutionary impulse characteristic of the Baby Boomer generation and their collective rebuke of the repressive social mores (racism, sexism, and the entanglements of the military industrial complex) that had been handed to them by the very generation that had also built the marketing science edifice. Marketing's interpretive turn invoked the same spirit of creative self-expression, rebellion against institutional authority, and the celebration of hedonism (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) that characterized the countercultural youth movement of the 1960s and that had been paradoxically appropriated by marketing and advertising practitioners as a means to revitalize and further propagate the ideology of consumerism (see Frank, 1997; Holt, 2002). Although a decade or so late to this countercultural party, its humanistic questioning of cultural orthodoxies eventually gained traction in the consumer research field and opened the door for what would eventually become a heteroglossic rescripting of its disciplinary practices.

### **CCT's humanistic/experientialist discursive system**

The conditions of institutional possibility in which the CCT heteroglossia operates have been set by the global network of academic marketing departments (in which the discursive systems favored by prestigious research universities in the United States have held a hegemonic institutional grip over academic publishing and tenure credentialing); the sociopolitical struggles through which the marketing profession has sought to gain greater legitimacy in business schools and management fields (Tadjewski, 2006); related disciplinary predispositions toward certain modes of argumentation which had been set by prior philosophy of science debates among thought leaders in the marketing and consumer research fields (see Brown, 1996 for a review), and last but not least, the editorial policies (and reviewer proclivities) of key journals in which CCT-oriented research has carved out its most prominent institutional niches (see Arnould and Thompson, 2005, 2007; Sherry, 1991; Tadjewski, 2010).<sup>1</sup>

The 1980s were the tumultuous decade in which CCT (then known as interpretivist or post-positivist consumer research) made its most dramatic legitimating advances in the marketing and consumer research fields (Belk, 1991; Lutz, 1989; Sherry, 1991). During this period, so animated by a sense of Kuhnian revolution (Tadajewski, 2008), flagship consumer research journals and edited volumes published a steady stream of articles that argued for the value of structuralism (Levy, 1981), semiotic perspectives (Mick, 1986), symbolic interactionism (Solomon, 1983), culturally oriented anthropological frameworks (Arnould, 1989; Sherry, 1983), critically oriented macroperspectives (Firat, 1987), and literary critical deconstructionism (Hirschman, 1988, 1990; Holbrook and Grayson, 1986; Stern, 1988). While laying the groundwork for the development of the CCT heteroglossia, many of these alternative interpretive frameworks remained largely peripheral to the paradigmatic conversations that most reshaped the consumer research field.

The discursive system that most effectively mobilized the consumer research field to broaden its methodological, theoretical, and topical horizons argued for the importance and indeed necessity of studying consumers' experiences and the personal meanings they attached to possessions and acts of consumption (Belk et al., 1988; Hirschman, 1992; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Rook, 1985, 1987; Schouten, 1991; Thompson et al., 1989). We refer to this discursive system as the humanistic/experientialist discourse.

This discursive system emerged in marketing and consumer research fields that were largely antagonistic toward research perspectives that diverged from the theoretical axioms of microeconomics and cognitive psychology, the methodological prescriptions of quantification, and the hypothetico-deductive model of scientific research. Advocates of alternative ontologies of consumption found a compelling rationale for disciplinary legitimacy by drawing out a series of oppositional contrasts to consumer research steeped in positivistic methodologies and rational decision maker assumptions (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Sherry, 1991). They drew from the vernacular of humanistic social psychology and its romanticizing veneration of the particular over the abstract; the artistic over the technical; the emotional and expressive over the rational and utilitarian (see Campbell, 1987); and the antistructure of liminality over the structured relations of the conventional marketplace.

Accordingly, humanistic/experientialist discourses constructed consumers as emotional, creative, and inner-directed individuals who sought self-actualizing experiences, the latter characterized by ideals of authenticity, deep meaning, and edifying aesthetic experiences. This ontological formulation significantly diverged from the view of the consumer as a utility maximizing, information aggregator, which then held sway, and to a remarkable degree still does in the marketing and consumer behavior fields. And it further challenged the idea that the ontological domain of consumer research should be limited to prepurchase decision making and buyer behavior and, instead, argued that consumer researchers should study a broader range of consumption experiences and practices (Belk, 1987; Holbrook, 1987).

Humanistic/experientialist discourses celebrated emotional spontaneity, consumer agency (as meaning makers), and the contextual nuances of consumption meanings and experiences (Hirschman, 1986; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Thompson et al., 1989). Humanistic/experientialist CCT, therefore, represented a coherent paradigmatic alternative to information-processing theories, which reduced the complexity and indeterminacy of consumer experience to the mechanistic outputs of mental structures and soft-wired decision algorithms (Belk, 1987; Holbrook, 1987; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Some leading voices in the emerging CCT tradition also took exception to sociological studies, which rendered the consumer-in-society as a "judgmental dope" (Anderson, 1986, 1989; compare Garfinkel, 1967), who acted in scripted accordance with socially sanctioned rules and

norms (Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1986; Oswald, 1999; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). CCT's humanistic/experientialist discourse also prefigured the reader-response turn in media and cultural studies by rebuking so-called hypodermic models of media consumption that portrayed advertising and commercial media as injecting fully formed, ideologies into the passively receptive minds of consumers (compare Jenkins, 1992). In contrast, CCT researchers argued, often through emic data, that consumers actively reworked commercial meanings in ways that were sometimes critical and sometimes creatively repurposed (and hence cocreated) to serve their identity goals (Hirschman and Thompson, 1997; Kozinets, 1997; McCracken, 1989; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Ritson and Elliott, 1999; Scott, 1990, 1994).

Humanistic/experientialist CCT discourses also espoused an axiological stance, which leveraged the romantic ideal of the authentic artist who eschews commercial success in favor of meaningful self-expression to rebel against technocratic/instrumental constructions of consumers as targets of profit-seeking managerial actions (Belk, 1987; Holbrook, 1987). These proto-CCT researchers endorsed the goal of studying consumption for its own intrinsic value and generating basic knowledge about the meanings of consumption in everyday life. This axiological premise eschewed managerial relevance as a source of disciplinary importance and legitimacy and enabled CCT researchers to claim philosophical and intellectual kinship with the hallowed base disciplines of sociology and anthropology that had historically viewed the marketing profession with skepticism, distrust, and even intellectual disdain (Belk, 1987; Holbrook, 1987).

In conjunction with their valorization of the autotelic, noninstrumental, esthetic, symbolic, and experiential aspects of consumption, humanistic/experientialist discourses also accepted the methodological individualist assumption that the consumer subject is the fundamental unit of analysis. Accordingly, many of the foundational CCT studies, discursively constructed consumer culture as a kind of symbolic supermarket in which autonomous consumers made selections, chose identities, and extended their core selves through the ownership and use of material goods (see Askegaard and Linnet, 2011; Holt, 1997; Ritson and Elliott, 1999 for more extensive criticisms of these methodological individualist assumptions). Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) treatise on the experiential aspects of consumption—and their companion piece on hedonic consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982)<sup>2</sup>—and the high profile consumer behavior odyssey (Belk, 1991; Belk et al., 1988, 1989) stand as key inflection points through which these methodological individualist motifs crystallized as an organized discursive system.

Importantly, these ontological and axiological arguments were supplemented by a verificationist epistemology that functioned as a qualitative analogue to the logical empiricist methods of validation which, at that time, governed standards of legitimate marketing and consumer research (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). Humanistic/experientialist CCT embraced research approaches—most notably naturalistic inquiry (Belk et al., 1988) and existential-phenomenology (Thompson et al., 1989)—that were designed to elicit and document the emic and experientially based perspectives of consumers. While diverging from many logical empiricist research practices, humanistic/experientialist-oriented CCT researchers were not challenging marketing's dominant episteme so much as inverting its axiomatic belief that the research enterprise should ideally function as an undistorted “mirror of nature” (see Rorty, 1979). The logical empiricist episteme held that subjective perceptions imposed distorting biases on the research process that must be filtered out through assiduous application of quantifiable measures, controlled experiments, large, representative samples, and statistical validation. Humanistic/experientialist discourses countered that such objectifying research procedures were themselves barriers to attaining deep insights into the fundamentally subjective experiences of consumers. To adequately represent the fuller range of



experiences and meanings that animated consumption, advocates of this subjectivist-privileging epistemology endorsed methodologies that were designed to closely document consumers' experiences and perspectives and that recognized the researcher's essential role as an empathetic, sense-making instrument.

Given the institutional setting and epistemological proclivities of the consumer research/marketing fields in the early 1980s, early proponents of the nascent CCT approach had strong, and indeed overwhelming, incentives to position their arguments within logical empiricist vernaculars that were palatable to institutional gatekeepers (journal editors, reviewers, conference chairs, etc.) and the broader membership of the Association for Consumer Research: a key constituency which early CCT proponents needed to recruit to their paradigm building case (see Belk, 1991). Although not necessarily stated as an overt methodological axiom, a symptom of this amalgam of status-quo epistemological values and pragmatic *real politik* was the so-called member check—consumers verifying that a researcher's interpretation provided an accurate portrayal of their experiences and worldviews—often construed as an absolute arbiter of validation: a logic that almost guaranteed that only meanings that stayed close to the emic were likely to meet this standard of trustworthiness.

As humanistic/experientialist articulations of CCT became more prevalent in consumer research, however, latent internal tensions in the broader and still emerging CCT heteroglossia began to exert transformative pressures on its discursive practices. As the quasi-positivistic procedural norms of naturalistic inquiry became gradually displaced, CCT researchers adopted more open ended, hermeneutic and poststructuralist epistemic principles. Rather than seeking a single correct interpretation undergirded by convergence among researchers (and auditors) or endorsement from consumer participants, CCT researchers supported their interpretive claims through rhetorical means—in a manner akin to the logic of judicial argumentation—by systematically explicating layers of cultural meaning, elucidating sociohistorically grounded connections between emic articulations and cultural and ideological frames, and demonstrating novel theoretical insights through comparisons to more orthodox or established theoretical frameworks (compare Arnold and Fischer, 1994; Holt, 1997; Kozinets, 2008; Peñaloza, 1998; Thompson et al., 1998). This epistemic shift afforded CCT researchers greater interpretive license and enjoined modes of validation more consistent with the so-called decentering of the subject ethos characteristic of structuralist and poststructuralist epistemes (Arnold and Fischer, 1994; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1988).

Critics of these humanistic/experientialist conventions often overlook the institutional forces in play and their pragmatic consequence of creating fissures in the prevailing disciplinary hegemony, which subsequently accommodated a flow of unabashedly poststructural research discourses and practices. Much like sausage factories and political compromises, the genealogical history of CCT's paradigmatic genesis may not always be pleasant to recognize but it offers informative insights into structural influences and discursive resources that have shaped "the history of the present" (Foucault, 1977: 31).

## **From the humanistic rebels to a heteroglossic interpretive community**

Proponents of this humanistic/experientialist discursive system drew theoretical inspiration from an eclectic range of sources. While reframing many foundational works in humanistic, experiential, and highly agentic terms, CCT pioneers nonetheless directed consumer researchers toward a broad spectrum of social theorists—Theodor Adorno, Arjun Appadurai, Pierre Bourdieu, Mary

Douglas, Emile Durkheim, Michel Foucault, Erich Fromm, Clifford Geertz, Donna Haraway, Dick Hebdige, Igor Kopytoff, Herbert Marcuse, Karl Mannheim, Marcel Mauss, Saskia Sassen, Max Weber, and Raymond Williams, among many others—whose germinal theories harbored implications for very different modes of analysis. As a new generation of CCT researchers began to remap consumer research, they quickly developed social constructivist, poststructuralist, dialogical, critical theoretical, actor-network, systems theoretical, and feminist discursive threads in innovative ways, often treating the humanistic/experientialist frameworks of their CCT progenitors as a useful rhetorical foil (Bristor and Fischer, 1993; Brown, 1995, 1998; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Giesler, 2006; Holt, 1995, 1997; Murray and Ozanne, 1991; Thompson et al., 1998).

With these heteroglossic considerations in mind, we turn to Askegaard and Linett's closing thoughts on the current and future state of CCT:

It is a legitimate analytical strategy to represent consumers as being motivated by their 'identity projects'; but if the analysis aims for an elucidation of 'consumer culture', it should acknowledge the cultural, historical and societal conditions that make this identity and the means of attaining it attractive and legitimate in the first place. While some consumption research offers compelling ethnographic accounts of everyday face-to-face interactions among consumers in 'close contexts', such as brand communities or families, and while we want to retain that focus on 'close social context', we argue also for being attentive to the context of contexts: societal class divisions, historical and global processes, cultural values and norms . . . The present paper is not an attempt to hegemonize any particular theoretical or empirical approach. It is an attempt to carve out an epistemological space for an emerging field of CCT. This epistemological space is neither deeply phenomenological in the anthropological tradition of emic descriptions of contextualized social phenomena, nor is it sociologically 'grand' theorization on a more aggregate level, although it contains elements of both of these (pp. 396–7).

From our standpoint, the envisioned epistemological (and ontological) space, which occupies the dialogical intersection of the structural and the agentic, is in fact already well established in the CCT literature, and the critique reflects a highly partial read of the existing corpus. Accordingly, the remainder of our discussion will consider why prior reflexive accounts have tended to represent contemporary CCT in ways that continually harken back to its humanistic/experientialist genesis, while understating its heteroglossic complexity and diversity.

First and foremost, a heteroglossic field of inquiry generates an intellectually heterogeneous interpretive community (see Fish, 1982; Scott, 1994), constituted by readers who have more or less expertise in the area (e.g. lifelong CCT scholars vs. first year doctoral students with CCT interests) and more centrally or peripherally located members (e.g. regular readers of CCT research and active members of its research community vs. a social psychologist selectively referencing a CCT paper on consumer identity). The variation that members bring to the CCT interpretive community both in terms of their theoretical orientations (sociological, anthropological, historical, critical, and social psychological) and levels of expertise is now an integral characteristic of CCT's institutional position and the variegated ways its research is understood and used within the fields of marketing, consumer research, and beyond.

Second, for members of the CCT community who have more expertise and whose professional identities are located more in its paradigmatic center (which should correspond to a more extensive and routine engagement with the ever expanding CCT literature), matters of agency, and emic meaning are *not* likely to be understood through a romanticizing

interpretive lens that excises the role of culture and social structure. Rather, a researcher immersed in the CCT heteroglossia will be well versed in the critiques of the humanistic/experientialist legacy and its many blind spots toward power, social stratification, gender hierarchies, ideological interpellations, and other structuring forces (e.g. Bristor and Fischer, 1993; Holt, 1997; Murray, 2002; Shankar et al., 2006). Furthermore, such CCT researchers will have ready access to many ontological frameworks that have gained currency as post-dualistic alternatives to the humanistic/experientialist legacy, such as Bourdieu's theory of practice (Holt, 1998); cognitive anthropology (Ringberg et al., 2007); Giddens's structuration theory (Lamla, 2008); Foucault's account of power/knowledge, governmentality, and technologies of the self (Thompson, 2004; Zwick et al., 2008); Butler's theory of performativity (Maclaran et al., 2009; Peñaloza, 1998; Schroeder and Borgerson, 1998); Bakhtin's dialogism (Belk, 2000; Brown et al., 1999); Elias's figurational sociology (Üstüner and Thompson, 2012); Luhmann's social systems theory (Giesler, 2003; Luedicke, 2011), Latourian actor-network theory (Epp and Price, 2010; Giesler, 2012); and Morin's writings on the coconstitutive relations between individual and society (see Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) and a gamut of other poststructuralist formulations, which all cohere around the precept that "human social action is at once 'structured' and 'structuring'" (Calhoun, 2013).

In the interpretive context of the humanistic/experientialist ontology, consumers' emic narratives were all too easily represented in ahistoric terms that betrayed problematic tendencies toward psychological reductionism and methodological individualism (Stinchcombe, 1968). However, in the contemporary CCT heteroglossia, it is now axiomatic that personal understandings draw from complex cultural systems and are articulated within specific sociocultural fields, and, hence, inflected through the prism of social structures, power relations, and, last but not least, embeddedness in marketplace structures (compare Arsel and Bean, 2013; Giesler, 2012; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Kozinets, 2008; Press and Arnould, 2011; Thompson and Tian, 2008).

When an interpretive community operates from a shared foundation of background knowledge, however, its core axiomatic principles become tacit. Accordingly, a contemporary CCT study that does not interrogate the sociohistorical conditions of possibility that frame consumers' emic accounts should not necessarily be interpreted as a regression to the ahistoricism of CCT's formative humanistic/experientialist stage of development.

To illustrate this point, let us consider Marcoux's (2009) ethnographic study of the home moving rituals among a sample of working class consumers living in Montreal. Marcoux adopted an emically oriented analytic approach to challenge a number of assumptions about the gift economy, which had become orthodox within the CCT literature. Drawing inspiration from the French antiutilitarian school, Marcoux showed that consumers often flee the gift economy to avoid its reciprocal obligations. Instead, these consumers turned to commercial moving services, which they experienced as affording greater personal autonomy and obviating interpersonal indebtedness, imposition, and power inequities that would otherwise accrue from gift economy exchanges. Marcoux's ethnographic account, however, did not explicitly consider many key sociohistoric influences that likely structured these moving rituals and their meanings, such as the history of Montreal's urbanization and suburbanization (and its influence on consumers' apartment relocation patterns); the ideological construction of renters and owners in French Canadian society; power relationships between the working class and bourgeois property owners; the historical construction and evolution of gender roles and family structures in French Canadian society; and so on (see Fournier 1998 for another theoretically and culturally sophisticated exemplar of an emic-oriented analysis).

Yet, Marcoux (2009) did not treat his participants' narratives as ahistoric, asocial expressions of inner essences, timeless emotional experiences, or sources of epistemological validation. His theoretical approach followed the tradition of material culture studies that investigate "how cultural phenomena become significant through the use of material objects" (Marcoux, 2009: 675). Furthermore, Marcoux (2009: 675) sought "to go beyond the individual level of analysis" by focusing on the question of how consumption meanings are constituted within social (and material) networks. His conceptualization of the *emic* was, therefore, highly social and closely aligned with the underlying precepts of practice theory (Warde, 2005), and culminated in a theoretical perspective on the relationship between the gift economy and the market that highlighted social dynamics operating within gift economy exchanges previously overlooked in consumer research. While not delving into the complex sociohistorical background that situates these market-mediated escapes from the gift economy, Marcoux's (2009) treatment of the *emic* is quite distinct from any kind of solipsistic individualism.

Turning to the interpretive practices of less well versed, novice, and/or peripheral members of the CCT community, the CCT heteroglossia still encompasses the discursive legacy of its formative humanistic/experientialist genesis (and corresponding verificationist epistemology). Importantly, these anachronistic discourses exhibit considerable institutional resonance in an academic marketing field whose dominant ontology privileges microeconomic assumptions and psychological process explanations and whose dominant epistemology remains wedded to a logical empiricist idealization of the scientific research enterprise (see Tadjewski, 2008). Owing to these institutional conditions, CCT's humanistic/experientialist discursive legacy remains a readily accessible and intellectually comfortable interpretive resource for more peripheral, conventionally trained (e.g. a social psychologist undertaking a CCT-positioned study), or novice members of the CCT heteroglossia.

We suggest that the enduring institutional resonance of the humanistic/experientialist discourse is a major contributor to dilemmas outlined by Askegaard and Linnet (2011). Furthermore, the exigencies of the review process can further compound these regressive tendencies. For example, an editor may turn to a "CCT reviewer" whose scholarly praxis crystallized in the field's formative years, and who therefore interprets the research through the lens of the humanistic/experientialist (and verificationist) discourse, or he/she may in light of the substantive topic under study, assign a "CCT friendly" reviewer whose primary training and research is in social psychology. In most cases, however, this designated "friendliness" merely indicates that the reviewer is not dogmatically dismissive of studies that diverge from positivistic standards of research legitimacy. However, neither situation assures that he/she will bring an informed, contemporary philosophy of science, or cultural perspective to the task at hand.

From our standpoint, *emic*-agentic accounts of consumption that are oblivious to structuring influences exerted by historical and sociocultural influences are points of anachronistic slippage in the CCT heteroglossia. Whether expressed in the production of research (i.e. a descriptive, phenomenological study presented at a conference) or by reviewers who demand empirical fidelity to consumer quotes (in ways that would make historical or actor-network arguments impossible since neither historical factors nor objects can speak for themselves), these anachronistic rhetorical gestures are the products of institutional factors such as the dominant intellectual tendencies of the marketing field at-large and the relatively few PhD granting institutions where students can gain extensive training in the CCT heteroglossia and its manifold theoretical traditions.

The CCT community has rallied to redress these institutional problems. CCT.org and the CCT Facebook page have become active forums discussing issues, sharing knowledge, and providing collective resources to those who are relatively new to the field. For over a decade, faculty and

students have regularly gathered at symposia and workshops on theories and research methods integral to the conduct and understanding of CCT research. These events constitute an intensive sharing of knowledge and experience among graduate students, newly minted assistant professors looking to enrich their understanding of the CCT heteroglossia and experienced faculty mentors. Similarly, the presentations, invited addresses, discussions, debates, and other intellectual interactions afforded by the annual CCT conference—now heading into its eighth year—immerse its participants in the fuller complexity of the CCT heteroglossia and, thereby, has a calibrating effect upon those whose understanding has been limited to it humanistic/experientialist legacy.

Building on this latter point, let us offer a *mis-en-scène* from the most recent CCT conference. In a fairly well-attended session, a younger and less experienced CCT researcher presented a set of findings that were largely descriptive and very much grounded in consumers' emic narratives. In the ensuing Q&A session, a more experienced CCT researcher noted that the findings were, in some key ways, inconsistent with a significant body of historical and cross-cultural research on the topic. To wit, the younger researcher responded with a humanistic/experientialist rationale of "well, I can only report what was in my data."

Our interpretation of this interaction—again understood as a fairly recurrent social performance that plays out across numerous CCT-themed conference sessions—is that it manifests a dichotomous, rather than a dialogical, script. And the key dichotomy is that between structure and agency. In such interactions, those who can knowledgeably appeal to broader social structuring influences (or studies about) are invoking a more robust and developed understanding of the CCT heteroglossia and, thereby, speaking from a position of authority. A less experienced researcher whose fluency in the CCT heteroglossia does not extend far beyond the humanistic/experiential discourse is placed in a defensive position, armed only with epistemologically suspect "grounded theory" arguments about letting the data speak for itself and not going beyond what it "says."

While such encounters also undoubtedly betray differences in status position, these power relations hinge on tendencies to interpret agentic accounts as inherently unsatisfactory or structural explanations as untrustworthy impositions upon consumer narratives. If structured as a dialogue, rather than a dualistic, and generally one-sided debate, such conference encounters could lead to discussions of how and why a particular set of emic accounts might seem to diverge from expectations based on sociocultural and historic patterns. Rather than presenting a challenge, the invocation of historical and cross-cultural differences would function as an invitation to reflect upon the specific context under study and to assess what other sociocultural factors might account for these differences between emic patterns and expected structural relations. Another ever-present possibility is that a researcher may not have interpreted his/her emic data with a sufficient understanding of relevant sociohistorical influences. In such a case, however, the ensuing dialogue would again enjoin the researcher and audience in a process of identifying key intersections between the agentic and the structural that could further illuminate the consumer phenomenon under study.

## **From colonization anxieties to postcolonial disruptions in the CCT heteroglossia**

To this juncture, we have argued that the CCT heteroglossia no longer privileges agentic accounts over structural explanations, as had been the case during its formative, first wave articulations that primarily invoked humanistic/experientialist discourses. This complex discursive system now encompasses a broad range of dialectical and dialogical theorizations that focus upon recursive relations between structure and agency playing out in varied consumption or marketplace contexts.

However, CCT's embeddedness in the marketing discipline creates institutional conditions in which humanistic/experientialist dualities can exert an anachronistic influence upon the conduct of a CCT study, a conference interaction, a journal review process, and other everyday interactions among members of CCT's heteroglossic interpretive community. While these institutional points of slippage are problems that need to be recognized and redressed, they are not evidence that the CCT heteroglossia remains paradigmatically vested in the study of consumer identity projects, at the expense of historical and sociological considerations.

Bourdieu (1988) has shown that academic debates often outlive their respective moments of intellectual vitality because their polarities are exceedingly useful devices for organizing courses, lectures, and, last but not least, generating symbolic distinctions among those in the academic field (which can then be marshaled into status competitions via promotion, publication, etc.). In this vein, the structure-agency debate is a chestnut philosophical dichotomy that can readily spark passionate discussions when used to reframe the ontological complexities of the CCT heteroglossia. The incitement potential of this formulation is further heightened by a posited institutional (and intellectual) dichotomy between North American and European business schools (see Cova and Cova, 2002). Yet, global flows of ideas, research, and people facilitated by journals, the web, international symposia and conferences, and accelerating transatlantic matriculations of American and European scholars taking positions as visiting and expat faculty continue to implode the remaining practical vestiges of geographically based intellectual divisions.

When we critically interrogate this constructed sense of North American and European intellectual difference, this form of institutional identity politics manifests broader institutional tensions between these respective marketing communities as each vie for power to set disciplinary agendas, determine which journals "count" (and for how much), and other forms of symbolic capital that in the end translate into greater or lesser resource flows. As one other example from the revelatory ephemerality of conference interactions, the *de facto* global rollout of the CCT brand at the 2005 European Association for Consumer Research conference (Gothenburg, Sweden) sparked a fair degree of controversy, as more than a few in the audience expressed concerns that the CCT initiative was seeking to colonize a vibrant European marketing community already engaged in sociocultural and critically oriented marketing research; in other words, would CCT be a new form of Kotlerization (compare Brown, 1995) that imposes a disciplining (and stultifying) North American model of marketing scholarship upon the sociologically attuned and critically oriented factions of the European Marketing and CB communities?

These concerns of academic colonization by the CCT brand reflect, in part, that the production implementation of classification schemes are very potent expressions of institutional power. As Moisander et al. (2009: 9) state the case in regard to the CCT academic brand (or model of academic governmentality):

Importantly, as an epistemic community, CCT is an act of power—far more than a mere label or brand for promoting "interpretive scholars," as Arnould and Thompson (2005) have positioned it. The label and the practices it represents effectively highlight various topics and methodological approaches over others. As its nomenclature reverberates among interpretive colleagues, and between interpretivists and noninterpretivists, CCT plays a not insignificant role in governing the review practices for journals, the selection of tracks and papers in conferences, the formation and contents of doctoral courses, and the selection of speakers in academic programs. For colleagues and students, for example, to say that they are doing CCT situates them within existing methodological customs and theoretical ways of thinking.

This quite legitimate warning about the potential of CCT to function as a disciplinary apparatus or dispositif (Foucault, 1980), however, also raises questions as to why similar concerns were not widely expressed over other terms that have, at various times, functioned as the “term of art” for this diverse research tradition, ranging from humanistic consumer research, interpretivist consumer research, postmodern consumer research, or for that matter, why Moisander et al.’s (2009) preferred term—consumer culture community—is not deemed to harbor similar risks: for example, community by its very nature implies collectively enforced symbolic boundaries that differentiate members from nonmembers, core members from poseurs and lurkers, and imposes a raft of constraining normative demands and traditions of authority that constrain the actions of its members (compare Arthur, 1993; Morris, 1996).

One key difference between CCT and its preceding appellations is that the former disseminated from a review piece in the *Journal of Consumer Research*; a journal not only historically associated with North American scholarship but also one where many key rhetorical conventions that govern the production of legitimate (i.e. publishable) culturally oriented consumer research have been established and globally disseminated. The hegemonic standing of the *Journal of Consumer Research* also sparked the creation of alternative publication outlets such as *Consumption, Markets, and Culture*, which encouraged both more critical and radical perspectives on consumption, and sought to transcend the Northern American hegemony represented by the *Journal of Consumer Research*:

Another boundary that *CMC* is trying to break down is the one that has historically developed between the academies of North America and the rest of the world. Of course, the barriers between North America and the rest of the world outside of Europe are even greater. These are barriers that also contribute to limitations in our understanding of the human condition. *CMC* is setting out to be an international as well as an interdisciplinary journal. (Firat, 1997)

More broadly, anxieties over the totalizing consequences of the CCT brand are further embedded in a series of administrative, institutional ranking, and faculty evaluation practices through which the “publish or perish” standards characteristic of elite North American institutions are steadily diffusing across the Atlantic. Both the French and English academic establishments have been roiled in recent years by central government impositions of higher publications standards (creating incentives to publish in international, read American journals). Also, school rankings, and government funding allocations are now more closely tied to audits of academic staff publication performance. This circumstance has led some European schools to poach American marketing scholars with strong publication records. More disconcertingly, this auditing mentality is beginning to impose those hiring criteria that have incentivized North American doctoral students to rush low impact, incremental scholarship to publication as part of the beauty contest that hiring in North American business schools has become.

However, these transatlantic institutional tensions elide that top North American and European marketing institutions are squarely located in the center of the global economy and share in relative terms, access to cultural and economic resources unimaginable to colleagues in many institutions in the southern hemisphere, such as free access to online publication services; travel funding for international conferences, and so on (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Chang, 2002; Sassen, 2006). Connell (2007) highlights how the emergence of contemporary social sciences—and the designations of canonical theorists and lines of inquiry—was shaped by forces of colonialism and corresponding discrepancies in economic and military power between the “metropole” (i.e. the

cultural, economic, and political centers of the northern power bloc) and the global peripheries of the Southern hemisphere. As Connell (2007: 47) observes, "Sociology was formed within the culture of imperialism, and embodied an intellectual response to the colonised world." This colonial (and postcolonial) framing casts those occupying the southern periphery as a source of exotic data and as objects of social science knowledge, rather than as those who can produce reflexive knowledge of their own social existence, much less provide ideas and concepts having intellectual value in northern epistemes.

The CCT heteroglossia reproduces these structures of power through its theoretical vernacular, which almost exclusively draws from intellectuals situated in the "metropole," a naturalized tendency clearly at work in our own analysis of the CCT heteroglossia. A more subtle but in some ways consequential manifestation of these center-periphery power relations lies in taken-for-granted institutional practices that encourage (and indeed require) that researchers from the southern peripheries become well-versed in northern/metropolitan theories and academic language games, while placing no corresponding expectations that northern researchers cultivate knowledge of what Connell refers to as "southern theory"; a hegemonizing dynamic which ideologically frames southern-hemisphere CCT researchers as scholarly "immigrants" in need of tutelage from their more intellectually developed northern counterparts.<sup>3</sup> This ideological framing also places southern scholars in a subservient position in matters of policy setting whereby their local knowledge is devalued in favor of the abstract theorizations and decontextualized econometric models favored by dominant class intellectuals from the northern hemisphere (see Chang, 2002, 2008; Klein, 2007; Smith, 2010).

We suggest that reflexive debates over the state of CCT manifest a parallel process that naturalizes and normalizes the institutional interests and dominant status of those positioned in the hegemonic spaces of the northern hemisphere while marginalizing the interests (and intellectual production) of scholars hailing from institutions in the southern hemisphere. The aforementioned symbolic distinctions are undergirded by the conditions of first-world privilege and power collectively shared by leading North American and European business schools whose interests are in fact more convergent than divergent (the same cross-continental convergence can be seen in other paradigmatic orientations in consumer research in the marketing field such as econometric modeling paradigms, behavioral decision theory, and transformative consumer research). Seen in this light, this article and others in this special issue are one of the many tacit strategies for consolidating power and influence, such as further naturalizing language games (in high-ranking marketing journals) that are habituated in the academic training of scholars from northern hemisphere institutions.

Reflexive analyses by their very nature tend to place a heavy emphasis on modes of representation. Accordingly, we could close our genealogical account with suggestions for how CCT's discursive practices could be reformulated in ways that are more inclusive and less prone to totalizing rhetorical gestures (see e.g. Joy, 1994; Joy et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 1998). Instead, we wish to amplify the postcolonial sensibility that undergirds these aforementioned concerns over the colonizing power exerted by the CCT academic brand (as supported by the broader institutional relation of powers between North American and European marketing factions). Postcolonial theory—yet another nebulous classification rife with diverse meanings and points of contestation—is commonly associated with a perspective that seeks to analyze how the enduring legacies of colonial and imperial modes of domination play out in particular sociocultural contexts and the complex play of political struggles, social stratifications, localized forms of power and resistance, asymmetrical dependencies, hybrid cultures, and ideological ambivalences that they engender (Hall, 1996; Kraidy, 2005).



As a practical matter, our deconstruction of this postcolonial subtext is, in effect, merely casting a rhetorical spotlight on a stream of CCT research that Arnould and Thompson (2005) collapsed under the subdomain of the sociohistoric patterning of consumption. Thus, Borgerson (2013) builds upon the critiques of Connell (2007) and other proponents of “southern theory” to revision the logic and practices of critical marketing. In a more empirical vein, the work of Peñaloza (1994a, 1994b, 1995, 2004, 2007) and Peñaloza and Gilly (1999) has been instrumental in interjecting issues, concerns, and voices related to the southern hemisphere into the CCT heteroglossia. Studies by Varman et al. (2012) and Bonsu and Polsa (2011) have explored how the so-called bottom-of-the-pyramid strategies—embraced by corporations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund—function as new modes of neo-liberal governmentality that in myriad ways privilege the generation of profitable markets over Bottom-of-the-Pyramid’s (BoP’s) ennobling narratives of economic empowerment and the attenuation of poverty.

Arnould has mounted a sustained critique of the Americo-Eurocentrism in consumer research, seeking to inject the distinctive logic of marketing and consumption practice among market actors in francophone West Africa into the conversation; for example, emphasizing the distinctive role of consumption practice in defining the boundaries of Hausa households (Arnould, 1984); alternative globalities enacted through consumption (Arnould, 1989); distinctive forms of relationship marketing (Arnould, 2001); and flexible cluster forms (Arnould and Mohr, 2005). Bonsu (2008, 2009) and DeBerry-Spence (2010) have sought to enlarge the African voice in CCT and critical marketing. Highlighting Bangladeshi and South African women’s experiences of market empowerment, Dolan and Scott (2009a, 2009b), Dolan et al. (2012), and Scott et al. (2012) have analyzed the “Double X” economy represented by these women’s unpaid and/or undervalued domestic labor and activities in the informal and underground economies. Scott and her colleagues have applied their pragmatic feminist perspective to investigate how entrepreneurial innovations can monetize such women’s market endeavors in ways that redress gender-based economic inequities and afford greater socioeconomic and cultural autonomy from oppressive, patriarchal gender regimes.

These insurgent CCT discourses (but contested too on Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/groups/213134458706536/>, September 16, 2012) destabilize and reorder formerly sedimented categories, classifications, and doxa and, in so doing, produce and mobilize new forms of cultural and social capital that alter the underlying relations of powers between CCT researchers, respectively, positioned in the centers and the peripheries. Bernardo Figueiredo’s resonant post to the CCT Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/213134458706536/>, August 21, 2012) also called attention to the desirability of extending CCT work to South American contexts. This post then sparked responses elaborating upon conferences, workshops (located in the both southern and northern hemispheres), and pedagogical and research collaborations seeking to bridge north–south institutionalized chasms. Other posters noted CCT’s ubiquitous errors of (co-)omission toward influential southern hemisphere cultural theorists, such as Canclini (1995, 2001, 2009) and the late Hau’ofa (2008), whose research and theorization have received minimal recognition at best.

In the broader interdisciplinary scheme, the CCT heteroglossia may serve as one activating node in a reverberating network of critical, postcolonial theorists seeking to diversify the range of legitimate cultural voices and theoretical perspectives and to create a heteroglossic canon that transcends historically and sociopolitically outmoded center–periphery, producer–consumer, researcher–researched, and north–south hegemonies. This postcolonial strand of the CCT heteroglossia would also enable consumers to better interrogate the historical conditions that underlie their own socioeconomic privileges and the sources of marginalization and disempowerment that affect such a large percentage of the world’s population. In so doing, postcolonial CCT would

begin to disentangle the material and discursive webs that both sustain and potentially destabilize these global networks of political, cultural, and socioeconomic distinctions and hierarchies. Of course, like previous efforts at institutional change, this diversified and decentralized project of social science reformation will likely continue to be a slow and arduous struggle against myriad forces of sociocultural inertia and deeply entrenched orthodoxies. By confronting and redressing these institutionalized “metropole” rhetorical conventions, the CCT community can gain a more immediate and revitalizing benefit: an expanded horizon for theoretical and practical innovation.

## Notes

1. In tracing out the institutional history of CCT, we suggest that the early 1980s were a pivotal historical moment in its paradigmatic formulation and leading researchers (Belk, Hirschman, Holbrook, O’Guinn, Sherry, Wallendorf, and other key participants in the consumer behavior odyssey); journals (particularly the *Journal of Consumer Research*); and conferences (Association for Consumer Research Annual Conference and the American Marketing Association’s Winter Education Conference) affiliated with North American institutions were the pivotal forces in the legitimation of CCT in the consumer research field. European marketing institutions also pursued a parallel cultural turn [such as Dominique Bouchet’s project of building a culturally oriented marketing department at Southern Denmark University, Odense, Denmark, and the equally path breaking cultural movement in the United Kingdom and Ireland founded by Stephen Brown, Douglas Brownlie, Richard Elliott, Christina Goulding, and Michael Saren and the Latin approach to culturally oriented marketing research detailed by Cova and Cova (2002)]. However, these European developments followed in the wake of the North American paradigm wars and, drew legitimation from, and in some cases, took strident exception to, the agenda-setting discursive practices, which flowed from the North American epicenter.
2. Hirschman and Holbrook’s companion articles revived and reconstituted suppressed institutional memories of Levy’s (1959) noteworthy formulation of marketing as a discipline that sells symbols to meaning-seeking consumers. Levy’s humanistic construction of marketing and consumers was quickly cast to the disciplinary margins by an array of institutional alliances and strategies that coalesced in the agenda setting and gatekeeping role of elite marketing institutions, and their promotion of quantitative research methods, closely coupled with microeconomic theories, as marketing’s defining paradigm (see Brown, 1996; Tadjewski, 2006).
3. Much like CCT, Connell (2007) emphasizes that southern theory is a term of aggregation and political identification (i.e. creating an academic brand) that encompasses considerable diversity among its intellectual orientations, research approaches, and substantive interests. The common thread that links many different exemplars of southern theory is their subordinate status to the academic discourses and practices valorized by academics in the northern metropole, a marginalized status, which in turn reflects the enduring legacy of colonial domination.

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